# RAF engineers sentenced for vandalising Paddington Bear statue



Two engineers from the Royal Air Force (RAF) have been sentenced after engaging in vandalism that involved the destruction and theft of a Paddington Bear statue in Newbury, Berkshire. Daniel Heath and William Lawrence, both 22 and stationed at RAF Odiham in Hampshire, were found guilty of criminal damage at Reading Magistrates’ Court on March 25.

The incident occurred shortly after 2am on March 2, 2025, when the pair was captured on CCTV footage approaching the statue located on Northbrook Street. Witnesses reported that the men attempted to forcibly remove the statue from its bench. The court was shown footage in which the two can be seen pulling at the statue, which eventually broke at its seam, allowing them to abscond with half of it. They then carried the statue through the town and took a taxi back to their base.

During the court proceedings, District Judge Sam Goozee condemned the actions of Heath and Lawrence as “an act of wanton vandalism” and expressed that their behaviour stood in stark contrast to the values associated with Paddington Bear. The judge emphasised that Paddington is a cultural icon, embodying kindness and tolerance, values particularly resonant among children and adults alike. He highlighted that the bear’s famous label, which reads "please look after this bear," could not be more opposite to what the defendants displayed that night.

In expressing concern for the local community, Trish Willetts, chief executive of Newbury Business Improvement District, stated that steps were taken to cover the remaining half of the damaged statue to prevent upsetting local children who might be distressed by its condition. The total cost to repair the statue was reported to be £5,451.

Heath and Lawrence were arrested the day after the incident at their barracks, where police found the missing half of the statue concealed in the boot of Lawrence’s car. Following their admissions of guilt, the pair received community orders lasting 12 months and were ordered to complete 150 hours of unpaid work. Each was also required to contribute £2,725 towards the repair costs of the statue.

The judge noted the defendants’ remorse, with their lawyer, Tom Brymer, describing them as “stupid” but ashamed of their actions. He pointed out that they were different from what was depicted in the CCTV footage.

The Paddington Bear statue is part of the Paddington Visits Trail, with 23 installations across the UK and Ireland, commemorating the character created by Michael Bond, who has historical ties to Newbury. The implications of the court's ruling are currently under review by the RAF, who acknowledged that their personnel had pleaded guilty to the charges.

Inspector Alan Hawkett of the Newbury Neighbourhood Policing Team stated that it is crucial to address acts of criminal damage and theft, regardless of the target, and affirmed the police's commitment to pursuing justice. The beloved statue was returned to its owners for restoration after a brief stay in police custody.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://news.sky.com/story/raf-engineers-who-stole-paddington-bear-statue-antithesis-of-everything-he-stands-for-judge-says-13335598> - This article corroborates the details of the incident, including the vandalism and theft of the Paddington Bear statue by RAF engineers Daniel Heath and William Lawrence, and the judge's comments condemning their actions as 'an act of wanton vandalism'.
* <https://www.euronews.com/2025/03/25/uk-royal-air-force-engineers-chastised-by-judge-over-theft-of-paddington-bear-statue> - This report supports the sentencing of the RAF engineers to community service and their requirement to pay towards repairs, highlighting the judge's remarks about Paddington Bear as a cultural icon.
* <https://www.forces.net/news/raf-engineers-fined-breaking-paddington-bear-statue-half-stealing-it> - This article confirms the financial and community service penalties given to Daniel Heath and William Lawrence, as well as the reasons behind their actions being described as 'an act of wanton vandalism'.
* <https://www.courts.michigan.gov/492eca/siteassets/publications/benchbooks/evidence/evidbb.pdf> - Although not directly related to the Paddington Bear incident, this document provides information on legal evidence procedures which may be relevant in understanding how evidence such as CCTV footage is handled in similar cases.
* <https://www.mass.gov/guide-to-evidence/article-xi-miscellaneous> - Similar to the Michigan document, this provides legal context on evidence handling but does not directly support the Paddington incident.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - As indicated as the source of the article, though no specific supporting article was found, this site acts as a general news source.
* <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/crime/article/paddington-statue-vandalism-was-antithesis-of-everything-the-bear-stands-for-f5z8hbggh> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/mar/25/judge-accuses-pair-of-wanton-vandalism-for-destroying-paddington-bear-statue> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/men-who-broke-paddington-bear-statue-antithesis-of-what-he-stands-for-judge-XJ6G4D5USFM25JYK44JVDC6B3U/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/hampshire-news/raf-engineers-who-stole-newbury-31279564> - Please view link - unable to able to access data